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USIB-D-41.13/31  
(COMOR-D-13/57)  
17 January 1966  
Limited Distribution

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Meaning of and Need for Higher Resolution of  
Overhead Photography

REFERENCE : USIB-D-41.13/30 (COMOR-D-13/56)  
27 December 1965, Limited Distribution

1. In restricted session at the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) meeting on 13 January 1966, with the Director, National Reconnaissance Office (D/NRO) present, the Chairman opened the discussion of the subject by saying that he believed that the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) had done a very good job in preparing the reference report and that he was impressed by the forwarding memorandum which accompanied it. Of particular significance, the Chairman said, was the thought that when there are improvements in resolution it was found that valuable information and unanticipated benefits were obtained that might not previously have been apparent.

2. The Chairman of COMOR replied that he was greatly appreciative of the fine cooperation and contributions of many people in preparing the report, especially from the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC), the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC), the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee (JAEIC), the Scientific Intelligence Committee (SIC) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The Chairman, COMOR, added, however, that he did have a suggested change to the Recommendation in the report as he thought that, as written, the Recommendation may be misleading in giving the impression that COMOR intends to apply the findings in the report only when recommending long-range requirements and then to do no more on the subject.

NRO review(s) completed.

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The Chairman, COMOR, said that it was the intention of the Committee to continue its examination of this subject, which would be made clear by his suggested change to the Recommendation furnished to the Members at the beginning of the meeting.

3. The Chairman said that he wanted, when he sent the report to the Secretary of Defense for the guidance of the Director, NRO, to add the thought that there should be a continuing close collaboration of NRO with the USIB and COMOR so that various trade-offs may be discussed from time to time.

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4. The State Member said that, in comparing the Recommendation as originally submitted and [ ] revision, he wanted to question if COMOR will soon complete its statement of long-term intelligence requirements for reconnaissance of denied territories by photographic satellite. The Chairman, COMOR, affirmed that the Committee was working on this report now. The State Member then stated that he had no objection to the new language for the Recommendation in the report but that he did not want to drop the statement regarding long-term requirements in the original version.

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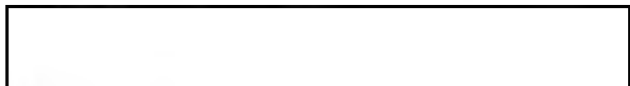
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6. The Director, NRO, stated that the report as written is a very good account of where we stand now, shows what higher resolution buys for us, and indicates the difficulties of obtaining such higher resolution. Dr. Flax noted that these difficulties are not stated explicitly but are an undercurrent throughout the report. He felt that, with reference to General Carroll's question, it very properly appears to skirt the issue of stating a requirement even though a chart attached to the report indicates the percentage of elements of information which can be completely or partially satisfied by various levels of resolution. The Director, NRO, said that he thought the report avoided saying much more

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[redacted] is a turning point. He believed it is clear that we can learn a lot about this problem; for example, a simulation and synthesis could be developed using our own systems to indicate what we might get at various degrees of higher resolution. If COMOR determined that this was needed, NRO could contribute together with the NPIC and others, in developing a body of such data. The Chairman, COMOR, said that photography of this higher resolution taken in the United States has been seen but that we do not have any experience regarding photography over other countries with which we are not so familiar. He did not see any way to meet this deficiency except to fly over Communist China and the Soviet Union. The Director, NRO, asked if this is not a matter of degree. He thought that there are many possible intermediate steps and inquired if COMOR believed it had as much information as could be useful. The Chairman, COMOR, replied that, while Mr. Lundahl of NPIC should speak to that, the thing that is lacking is a way to set up an actual intelligence problem, taking account of information from other sources, the analytical processes, etc. He said that higher resolution photography is likely to have a different impact on each intelligence problem and that a blanket statement on this subject cannot be made. The Director, NRO, agreed with that but added that from the amount of data he had seen just on what various resolutions can do, he was of the opinion that only the surface had been scratched. The Chairman of COMOR stated that more data could always be used.

7. The Chairman proposed that COMOR should get together with NRO and show them the working data and the rationale COMOR used in preparing the report, as a basis for considering the need for further data. The Chairman went on to say that he was inclined to agree to some extent with the views expressed by both Dr. Flax and [redacted]. The Director, NRO, and the Chairman, COMOR, agreed to arrange for such discussions.



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8. In light of the discussion, the USIB:

a. Noted the findings in the COMOR report contained in the Attachment to USIB-D-41.13/30.

b. Instructed COMOR to:

(1) Take account of these findings in completing a statement of long-term intelligence requirements for reconnaissance of denied territories by photographic satellites.

(2) Continue to examine the need for very high resolution photography in satisfying the most important intelligence requirements and to incorporate its findings concerning such need in recommendations to USIB and NRO whenever appropriate.

(3) Discuss with the Director, NRO, the working data and rationale COMOR used in preparing the report and the possible need for development of additional data.

c. Noted that the DCI would transmit the COMOR report to the Secretary of Defense for the guidance of NRO, with an expression of the desirability of continuing close collaboration of NRO with USIB and COMOR so that NRO may have the benefit of intelligence advice regarding various trade-offs.

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Executive Secretary

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